# RANCHO DELUXE

An Original Screenplay

By

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EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY.

A hot pickup truck highballs along a paved two-lane highway. The truck has exaggerated wide knobby wheels and is jacked up on its heavy suspension. It has a rifle rack in the rear window, two people dimly perceivable riding in front and Montana plates. It is summertime and the wipers have made two broad arcs through the dead bugs on the windshield. The highway winds tight along the Yellowstone River, above its gravelly bends and willow covered banks.

ANGLE

The truck brakes and turns off the paved road into a rugged backroad that is little better than a fire trail. The road winds up toward the Absaroka range, through high sage covered rangeland, up toward the clear blue sky.

INT. THE CAB OF THE PICKUP.

Two young men, JACK MCKEE and CECIL COLSON quite incidentally an Indian. They are dressed like a pair of cowboys; but they are not exactly that. Maybe they are the cowboys of the future.

JACK
Lazy T or Bar J?

CECIL
Lazy T.

JACK
Now, why do you say that?

CECIL
Because the Forest Service road
runs down below their corrals
and you can't see it from the house.

JACK
Let's toss a coin.

CECIL
Let's just decide.

JACK
Can you walk a quarter between
your fingers?

CECIL
Never mind that. That is the
(MORE)

CECIL (Contd)
first thing they teach you in jail. How to walk a coin between your fingers. Simple minded card tricks are next.

JACK
Is your seven-milimeter sighted in?

CECIL
No. Use the two-seventy.

JACK
You.

CECIL
Who was last?

JACK
I was.

CECIL
All right. Where's it sighted-in for?

JACK
Point blank at two hundred which'd put it three inches high say at seventy-five. Why do they teach you to walk a coin between your fingers first?

CECIL
I don't know. Are you nervous?

JACK
Absolutely.

CECIL
Well these aren't hanging times. Which one did we decide on?

JACK
Lazy T.

ANGLE

Truck forks off into the trees and the higher country of summer rangeland.

ANGLE

Grazing cattle, barbed wire, blue glittering mountain creeks diverted into patterned irrigation ditches.

DISSOLVE:

ANGLE

The side window of the pickup truck rolling down with electric smoothness.

ANGLE

From behind: a rifle taken down from the rack.

ANGLE

The side window as the rifle is rested in place, the small blue circle of telescopic sight visible.

JACK (OVER)
I'll do it.

CECIL
My leader.

JACK
You practice walking the coin-

THE RIFLE GOES OFF. THE MUZZLE JUMPS ABRUPTLY.

JACK
-until you feel like you got
it to where you're proud of it.
Where's the saw?

ANGLE

A steer lies dead.

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL climb out of the truck.

CECIL
In the bed. I brought the
little McCullogh. We better
fill it up.

JACK
Is it hard to start?

CECIL
You are nervous. Want me to
show you a few card tricks?

ANGLE

CECIL pulls the chain saw out of the truck bed.

JACK
Just show me that thing start.

ANGLE

The two walk toward the steer. CECIL holds the chain saw in one hand and pulls the starter through a few times. Nothing. Tries again and nothing. They get to the steer.

CECIL
Did you gas this mother up?

JACK
Smell it! It's flooded.

CECIL
Then we got to wait it out.

ANGLE

They put the saw down and sit down next to the dead steer. CECIL takes out a coin and, as they wait, he begins to walk it between his fingers.

JACK
Well, you're real good at that.

CECIL
My plan is to not get any better.
Want me to try the saw?

JACK
I'll do it.

CECIL
Wait a minute so you don't flood it worse.

JACK
All right. Just be a couple of sleepy rustlers waitin for somebody to come up here to mend fence. There is no way out of here but that fire road. So while we may have killed one of their cows, we won't put them to a lot of trouble making the arrest. Put that coin away please.

CECIL
How many cows Lazy T runnin here?

JACK
Couple thousand on the summer range.

CECIL
Minus this one.

JACK
That's right. You'll want to figure that in there. If you and I had stayed in the service, this steer would have lived and the Lazy T would have been running a full two thousand head on the summer range. Now they're down to nineteen hundred ninety nine and there don't hardly seem to be any point in going on. I'm going to try it.

ANGLE

JACK stands up, picks up the chain saw, pulls it through and starts it. It makes a crazy TWO-STROKE SCREAM.

JACK
(yelling over the chain saw:)
Hold up the head, then the quarters as I work!

ANGLE

The dead steer's head as the chain saw SCREAMS through the neck. The head tumbles forward, spilling a world of blood and JACK moves to a front quarter and starts again.

THE CREDITS run through this sequence as JACK butchers the steer with precise, wasteless violence. He stops to open the belly with his pocket knife and CECIL leans in for the windpipe and hauls all of the insides out in a glistening pile. We pull back as they finish, and as THE CREDITS finish and

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. PICKUP.

Heading North on the same paved road.

CECIL
Jack?

JACK
Huh.

CECIL
Do you believe in the tooth faerie?

JACK
The one takes your tooth from under your pillow?

CECIL
Yeah.

JACK
I do if you do, Cecil.

CECIL
Well, I do too then. You want to run this beef to the locker plant?

DISSOLVE:

The scene of the crime. Two hands, CURT and BURT, stand by the huge blood spot, the head and other remains.

CURT
My plan would be to watch the Tuesday night livestock report from Butte and see what we can get for four hoofs, a head and a hundred twenty five pounds of cow guts.

BURT
We know it's not a coyote this time.

CURT
Let's report it before it gets blamed on us.

BURT
My plan would be to mail this to someone. Maybe them hippies in Missoula could put it on their gardens.

EXT. LOCKER PLANT.

JACK and CECIL are hauling the quartered steer out onto a loading dock. An old man named DIZZY oversees.

JACK
Dizzy, you want to go ahead and butcher this out for us? And get this fat trimmed back good as you can so it will store.

DIZZY
Where are you boys gettin all this beef?

CECIL
Traded an army jeep for this one to some old pilgrim up the Shields River.

DIZZY
The five finger discount plan?

CECIL
*No Diz, as I said we traded* for this steer.

DIZZY
Well, I'll tell you Cecil, if you traded an army jeep for this steer, you done fine. This steer is somewhere between good and choice. I *wouldn't know what it weighed* but it's going to dress around seventy percent. Now if I had a choice two year old, I wouldn't speed-butcher it with a chain saw.

JACK
Hey Diz, we're just buying some cold storage.

INT. HELICOPTER

Rancher JOHN BROWN and the TWO HANDS we have seen before. The FIRST HAND flies the helicopter.

FIRST HAND
Right about in here.

ANGLE

Their point-of-view: the steer head, hoofs and blood spot.

SECOND HAND

We was gonna watch the livestock report and see what hooves was goin for.

JOHN BROWN

Shut up. I'm losing stock. How did they get in here?

SECOND HAND

Forest service road.

JOHN BROWN

I'm going to close that road.

FIRST HAND

You can't. It's a fire road.

JOHN BROWN

I'll go to Helena and close that road. I closed fire service roads all over Whyming. I won't live in a West that is not free. Who's got a rifle?

SECOND HAND

There's a saddle gun behind your seat.

ANGLE

A gopher gets it with a 30-30 round.

INT. HELICOPTER

JOHN BROWN

I will not have my stock breaking legs in gopher burrows. I will not have a West that is not free. And at this point in the twentieth century I will not be plagued by rustlers. See any eagles?

FIRST HAND

Saw two at the head of Daisy Dean Creek.

JOHN BROWN

Well, if they start getting down on this place I want a report on it. When does that chopper mechanic get here from Billings?

*FIRST HAND*

Wednesday.

JOHN BROWN

Well, you tell him we hunt predators, airlift big game and track rustlers with this sonofabitch and we can't afford carbeurator trouble in blind canyons again!

FIRST HAND

Yes sir, John. I'll tell him.

JOHN BROWN

That is the longest walk I have ever taken! I have blisters on my blisters! One more bit of engine trouble and I stand up at the Cattleman's Association and announce what a piece of shit this thing is. Now you tell that mechanic that and tell him to tell his boss.

EXT. HELICOPTER.

It pulls away into the mountains, LAZY T emblazoned on its side.

DISSOLVE:

The helicopter lands in a ranch yard. A remote place with an unusually luxurious house.

DISSOLVE:

The five acre tracts outside of Livingston, Montana.

JACK and CECIL are hunkered in the yard of a small frame house. Walking around in front of them gesticulating with great energy is a man named KARL, slightly older than they are. He wears an untrimmed beard and serious spectacles.

KARL

What do I want with beef? I have nothing to trade you anyway.

CECIL
What about your dirt bike?

KARL
My Elsinore? Are you nuts? That's worth more than your steer. By the way, what kind of condition was this animal in?

JACK
Real choice.

CECIL
You got a nice rifle?

KARL
I got a Sharps buffalo rifle, a real plains rifle made by W. C. Freund.

CECIL
What caliber.

KARL
50 Sharps.

CECIL
I'll trade you my right rear quarter.

KARL
What did this animal weigh?

CECIL
Around a thousand.

KARL
What kind of shape?

CECIL
Dizzy thought it'd butcher right at seventy per cent.

KARL
How many ribs on the quarter.

CECIL
I'm so glad you asked. It's a three rib quarter and it'll run to half the weight of that side.

KARL
Throw in the liver and kidneys
and you got a deal.

CECIL
Get the Sharps. Jack and me're
about the last of the plains men.
What kind of grass you holding?

KARL
One more ki' of Michoacan.

JACK
That wasn't Michoacan.

KARL
All right, it was straight
Mexican. But it was all tops
and leaves.

JACK
Tell you what, I'll give you
my whole round for a half of
that ki'.

KARL
What's that give me?

JACK
It's way in your favor. It
gives you round steak, top
round, swiss steak, heel of
round, hind shank and a world
of really ace hamburger.

KARL
All right but if you've
fucked me around on this-

DISSOLVE:

JACK and CECIL at the doorway of a nice old two story brick house; an irritable looking elderly lady stands in the doorway.

JACK
Mizziz Castle, I hate to be
so late in getting to you on
our rent. The Indian and I
have been out of town and now
there is some problem on transferring funds from the savings
(MORE)

JACK (Contd)
account to the special checking account without losing our Christmas bonus-

MISSUS CASTLE
Get to the point.

JACK
Well, I hope you will let us pay our rent with a hundred pounds of U.S. Prime beef. That is about double the value we owe you.

CECIL
Or more.

MISSUS CASTLE
Is this reservation cattle?

CECIL
Oh, no ma'am, grain fed. We swapped a jeep for it.

JACK
We don't want to lose our Christmas bonus down at the bank.

MISSUS CASTLE
Last month it was a sheep-

JACK
And next month it will be hard cash.

MISSUS CASTLE
-It was still warm.

CECIL
Yes, ma'am. Cost us a roto-tiller. We got beat out of a lot of value on that one.

JACK
We got it down at the locker plant now, Mizziz Castle. So, we'll just get it flash froze and bring it on around back like last time.

FADE OUT.

INT. FLY FACTORY

JACK and CECIL enter this curious world. Row after row of women, maybe sixty or seventy women of every description, are tying flies. In front of each woman is a small vise with a minute, bright fly fastened in it. As the two enter, some of the women look up and watch them. They wander with embarrassment to BETTY and DEE, two good looking hot numbers.

ANGLE

JACK and BETTY.

JACK
(softly:)
How are you, Betty?

BETTY
Bored.

JACK
What are you tying this week?

BETTY
Fan wing royal coachmen.

JACK
And you're bored? That sounds like an interesting fly.

BETTY
Oh, fuck you, Jack.

JACK
Want to go out and play tonight?

BETTY
I'm supposed to help my sister catch our horses up in the Crazies.

JACK
If your sister will go out with Cecil, we'll help you.

BETTY
You'll have to bring your own horses-

ANGLE

CECIL and DEE.

CECIL
Okay, if you don't like my idea, you tell me what you want to do.

DEE
I haven't any idea.

CECIL
Do you want to go out with me?

DEE
I haven't any idea.

CECIL
We could find something fun to do.

DEE
Such as?

JACK walks up.

JACK
Let's go.

CECIL
Hold on. Me and Dee are still workin this out-

DEE
Says you.

JACK
Come on Cece, let's leave this bow-wow to her work.

DEE
Bow-wow!

ANGLE

Formidable LADY FLY TYING FOREMAN.

LADY FOREMAN
This is a place of business. The rootbeer stand is immediately West of town, just this side of highway 90.

EXT. MAIN STREET, LIVINGSTON, MONTANA.

JACK and CECIL.

JACK
I got you a date with Betty's sister Mary.

CECIL
All right!

JACK
That is the tastiest lady around here, if you ask me.

CECIL
She has lips of cherry wine and eyes like diamonds.

JACK
Yeah Cecil, that's it.

CECIL
Should I bring a lot of rubbers?

JACK
Aw, Cecil, Jesus- Indians.

CECIL
Sorry.

JACK
We have to help them catch their dad's horses.

CECIL
Where at?

JACK
Up in the Crazies. So, I'll meet you around five and we'll load our horses. I'll put the stock rack on the truck-

CECIL
Why don't you drop me at the house-

INT. PICKUP.

They drive through the East side of Livingston, through the old red light district, down streets of cutleaf birch, past the county courthouse with its trapdoor in the ceiling for hangings, and mainly through districts of the small, tight housing a cattle town with the Northern Pacific's biggest railroad shops West of Minnesota has produced in a century. Still, there are *neighborhood groceries* and a lost America of baseball and evening newspapers in the summer, and retired cattlemen and railroaders on their porches with yard fences welded out of locomotive flue pipe.

JACK
Today's Enterprise announced old John Brown bought the Bar J. So, it doesn't matter which fork we took, it was still gonna be one of his cows.

CECIL
I'm glad we got it in storage. I didn't like the feeling when that chain saw flooded.

JACK
Do you think we liberated Brown's steer?

CECIL
Well, I don't know about that. Karl is always talking about liberating stuff but then he beats us out on trades.

JACK
I don't know if John Brown is so bad either. He keeps some of these shit-ass tourists from putting an aluminum housetrailer on a quarter acre of pasture.

CECIL
Did you ever see Cheyenne Autumn.

JACK
Oh, yeah.

CECIL
Well, in another twenty years, they're gonna make Aluminum Autumn.

JACK
I think they're going to shoot it in Colorado.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. CECIL'S FAMILY HOUSE.

A ramshackle one story affair on South G Street. The street is on a hall and the lot is built-up and nearly bare of sod. There's an old Dodge Power Wagon in the driveway with some rain damaged hay bails. CECIL climbs out of the truck and walks toward the house.

INT. SAME.

MRS. COLSON, a heavy white woman is in the kitchen, which like the rest of the house, seems in a state of process toward some final rummage sale.

MRS. COLSON
Hello, Cecil!

CECIL
Hello, momma. Where's daddy.

MRS. COLSON
Watchin TV.

INT. A GLOOMY LIVING ROOM.

CECIL comes in and flops down in a chair facing his father, a dignified old half-breed Assiniboine Indian.

MR. COLSON
Turn off that TV, Cecil.

He does so.

MR. COLSON
Just saw a man last week on that thing who ranched up at Fort Belknap when your granddad and I lived on the reservation. His name was Bob Not-A-Small-Crow. He was a Northern Cheyenne passing as a Cree so he could get a propane franchise in Zortman.

CECIL
Did he get it?

MR. COLSON
Yes, sure did. Now I see he is living in Los Angeles. Has a pancake restaurant and turns up on this quiz show.

CECIL
When did he leave the reservation?

MR. COLSON
It was the year your granddad died up in the Missouri Breaks. That's why I remember him. Your granddad died very quietly during the night and in the morning I was snowed in with him. The truck wouldn't move in that snow. So, I took the body out and let it freeze flat. Then I strapped two old planks of spruce lath onto him, tied a rope around his head and he glided out slick as a tobaggan.

CECIL
Where did you haul him?

MR. COLSON
That's what I'm saying. I hauled him down out of them Breaks to where Bob Not-A-Small-Crow had his propane storage. We left him under a tarpaulin until the blizzard stopped nine days later. Then we took him to Zortman and buried him with the Indians though he was a breed like you and me and a Catholic from running around with Canadian Metis.

CECIL
I wonder if Bob Not-A-Small-Crow tells em that at the pancake restaurant in Los Angeles.

MR. COLSON
Sonofabitch, Cecil! That's what I was wondering. Anyway, on the quiz show, he called himself Bob Small.

Comfortable silence.

CECIL
Find a job yet?

MR. COLSON
Nope. You?

CECIL

Nothin steady. I moved some stock up on the Lazy T. Scaled out water tanks last week.

MR. COLSON

I seen where John Brown bought another bunch of sections.

CECIL

Yeah, yeah. Sure is getting big.

MR. COLSON

Poor old dog. *Don't have a* thing better to occupy his time with than that. Trying to be king.

INT. JOHN BROWN'S RANCH HOUSE.

MRS. BROWN, an iron-willed mouse, stands in her living room with CURT and BURT. She holds some empty cartridge cases.

MRS. BROWN

Why have I asked you to save these? I have asked you to save these because they will help to show us that these rustling cases are all the work of the same man.

CURT

A lot of people have two-seventies, Missus Brown.

MRS. BROWN

Curt, you are a slow boat to China. Burt, you tell Curt what I told you.

BURT

Curt-

CURT

Yes, Burt?

BURT

The firing pin of a rifle is like a finger print. We're

*(MORE)*

BURT (Contd)
sending these cases in to the ballistics lab.

MRS. BROWN turns on her record player. Montavani-And-His-Strings floods the room.

MRS. BROWN
Anybody feel like dancing?

The two hands shuffle nervously.

MRS. BROWN
Come on, God damn it. I want some gothic ranch action. I want desire under the elms. I want some smouldering glances in the corrals-

BURT
Gee, Mrs. Brown-

CURT
I don't know-

MRS. BROWN
Piss off then. God. Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

EXT. PICKUP.

Heading for the Crazy Mountains, immediately North of Livingston. The stock rack is in place in back and two already saddled horses face out over the cab, their manes blowing in the seventy mile an hour breeze.

INT. PICKUP. JACK and CECIL.

JACK
When are we going to shoot your buffalo rifle?

CECIL
What are we going to shoot?

JACK
I tell you what I'd like to shoot. I'd like to go down to the foot of Second Street and shoot a Hertz Rent-a-car.

CECIL
I'd like to go over to the high-school and shoot a couple of blackboards.

JACK

I'd like to take that buffalo rifle and go over to the Sweetgrass County Seat and get myself bronzed like a baby shoe. I'd be a statue to the last of a long line mountain men.

CECIL

We said yesterday we was the last of the plains men.

JACK

Whatever.

CECIL

Either way, my people was already here to greet the first of your long line.

JACK

Some of your people, Cecil. Early day squaw humpers and bad-asses. For every part Assiniboine you got ten parts grease monkey.

DISSOLVE:

JACK

(still talking:)

I do like this new life. Beatin The Man.

(muses:)

I spent three long winters knocking ice columns out of Amtrak railroad tunnels. And it just never did seem like a suitable way for America to welcome me home from foreign wars.

EXT. ANGLES ON TRAVEL.

Going to the Crazy Mountains: The Shields River valley. A small winding river, dryland farming, small ranches, the gradual foothills to the Gallatin Range on the West and the more abrupt uplift of the Crazies to the East. An old railroad bed runs along the river; and every so often, there is a spur with corrals and a loading ramp under the heavy summer cottonwoods.

CEVIL (OVER)
I didn't even get the trip off of Uncle Sam. Went to Fort Leonard Wood to learn to be a cook. Got a dead cow to practice on and spent six weeks learning to make white sauce for the mashed potatoes. I did meet the woman I should have married though; but I never could get her name. So I had to pass on that one and get set up for something else.

JACK (OVER)
Get set up for what?

CECIL (OVER)
Leave me alone, Jack.

DISSOLVE:

A ranch gate. BETTY and her sister MARY are standing next to the gate with their father, a sawed-off little creep in a Hank Snow made-to-order cowboy suit. The girls' horses are tied to the gate and their father's Lincoln with a horseshoe for a hood ornament is parked facing out.

INT. CAB OF PICKUP.

JACK MCKEE is wearing an Elmer Fudd mask. He has his hat pulled down low.

JACK
Cecil, have you ever watched chickens fucking?

CECIL
I wouldn't say watched. Why do you ask?

EXT. TRUCK.

JACK climbing out with the mask still on.

JACK
Why you must be these ladies' dad!

THEIR DAD
How do, Mr.--

JACK
Fudd.

CECIL
I'm Cecil Colson, North American Indian.

JACK
We're here to help these ladies catch their horses. My bet is they've gone half wild up in them aspens with wire marks on every inch of their hides.

THEIR DAD
How right you are. You really wonder whether you shoulda given in when they whined and whined for another Appaloosa or high-price barrel racer-

JACK
They probably reverted to bucking stock by this time.

BETTY
Shut up Jack fore I paste your mouth.

MARY
And take off that rubber mask, cluck.

He does.

CECIL
Let's unload, Jack.

THEIR DAD
And I have to get. Just run all your ponies into the pole corral and I'll send the flatbed up for them in the morning.

He climbs into his Lincoln.

MARY AND BETTY
Night, Daddy. Night now.

JACK and CECIL go to their truck and back it up against a small hill. They open the gate on the back and CECIL climbs in between the two horses with their striped saddle blankets and well-worn saddles and backs them out of the truck one at a time, turns them around and secures them by their reins to the fence.

CECIL

How many horses are we looking for?

MARY

Five.

JACK

Where should we start looking?

MARY

Let's throw the I Ching and see.

BETTY

No we ain't throwing no I Ching and we ain't gettin stoned to find the horses.

MARY

Eat it, Betty.

BETTY

These highschool kids can't pick thur nose without gettin stoned and throwing the I Ching.

MARY

And you can't sleep at night without humpin cowboys in the driveway.

BETTY

Watch yer lip, Mary.

JACK

Now girls.

MARY

Or bank tellers or demolition derby drivers or brand inspectors just to name a few.

CECIL

Ladies! Damn! I'm getting disillusioned! Now let's just ride up and catch these ponies. This is America Today and God wants America on horseback finding lost Appaloosa barrel racers! Do I make my self clear?

They mount up in a little aimless cluster. JACK takes command and they start up across meadows of sweet grass, cheat grass and clover toward high fields of lupine and aspen. The evening sun sends long, rickety shadows down the slopes from the woods and WE HEAR RAUCOUS MAGPIES AND RAVENS IN THE TREES.

BETTY
You two go up to the top of the South pasture and we'll go to the forest-service line and we'll herd them back down this way. If we can catch one we'll have a simple time with the others.

They split up JACK AND BETTY to the left, CECIL AND MARY to the right.

ANGLE

CECIL AND MARY as they get out of earshot.

MARY
When they get to the trees she'll dive for his fly.

CECIL
Now you don't know no such thing, Mary.

MARY
Yeah I do. She's a dumb twat. I can't stand her. Flushed two lids down the toilet on me. Smashed my black light when she was drunk and tore up half my posters.

CECIL
How much difference in age is there between you?

MARY
Two years. But she's just about exactly half as hip as my grandma who's down at Senior Citizens cranking out doillies and reading Mickey Spillane to her boyfriends.

ANGLE

THEIR DAD returning in his Lincoln. He climbs out with a lariat, having decided to give everyone a hand, and starts to hike up toward the trees.

DISSOLVE:

Two cow ponies tied to a tree. WE HEAR PANTING, GRUNTING AND GASPING. We know what that is.

ANGLE

JACK AND BETTY fucking. In the hierarchy of sex events, this would be your Royal. We anticipate the crescendo.

ANGLE

THEIR DAD clambering in his Opryland western glamour rags.

ANGLE

CECIL AND MARY and their horses milling around separately.

CECIL
That is Dino Supreme.

MARY
I-am-loaded!

CECIL
Stony weed I tell you! Gaah!

MARY
Thee most possible preemo!
(sings:)
Can't ya see ya motha, babah,
standin in the shadowsuh!!!
Ooowhee!

ANGLE

JACK AND BETTY: crescendo!

BETTY
BAYBEE! BAYBEE! BAYBEE!

ANGLE

Tight on JACK'S face, puzzled and alarmed at this uproar. It subsides.

ANGLE

Tight on BETTY'S face as she subsides. Loveliness, peace and repose. Her eyes gradually open. Then widen...What!

ANGLE

BETTY'S point-of-view: Elmer Fudd.

BETTY
You miserable son of-

ANGLE

MARY talking to CECIL in a stoned out babble.

MARY
I uh I uh hadda drop out I uh I uh couldn't take another minute in a railroad-and-cattle town and I uh I took off for California and like wound up in San Diego and got a job in a direct-mail house and uh then I flipped out in Ensenada and like got it together to buy a bus ticket home and like walked away *from it all, y'know, like* a thousand hits of blotter acid got left behind in this Ramada Inn and like I never told the dude at the direct-mail *house*-

ANGLE

A huge naked Elmer Fudd is pursued in the trees by a weeping, naked lady yelling, "Is nothing sacred to you?" and so on, right up to

ANGLE

THEIR DAD appears point blank in their path; and gives us in one or two wordless takes a picture of wrath, loathing and disgust that we're going to be a long time forgetting.

THEIR DAD
(coldly:)
Betty. Get your things. Before your tits freeze. I'm going to take you home. Now that they have shut down the whore house.

ANGLE

MARY, a horse cropping directly behind her, sits in the lotus position and intones, "OM" from time to time.

THEIR DAD (OVER)
Mary, come with me. We're going home.

ANGLE

Tight on MARY'S drug stunned face.

MARY
Hunh?

INT. JOHN BROWN'S RANCH HOUSE.

It is late morning. JOHN BROWN and his wife CORA are padding around the house in their bathrobes making snacks.

JOHN BROWN
What kind of a day is it?

CORA BROWN
Pretty nice.

JOHN BROWN
What's that mean?

CORA BROWN
Clear skies with no sudden change predicted. Some cumulonimbus clouds associated with unstable airstreams over the mountains. But as I say, it looks like the weekend you golfers have hoped for.

JOHN BROWN
Jesus, Cora-

CORA BROWN
Are you bored, John?

JOHN BROWN
Yes.

CORA BROWN
What do you want to do?

JOHN BROWN
I don't know.

CORA BROWN
Want to go look for signs of the rustlers? What do you want to do?

JOHN BROWN
They probably haven't even been around.

CORA BROWN
Well, that's not my fault! And it's not my fault there're no more ranches for sale around here. Why don't you go into Livingston and buy a hat?

JOHN BROWN
I don't feel like it.

CORA BROWN
I've got it. Why don't you call a press conference on this rustling.

JOHN BROWN
That is not a bad idea, Cora. That's really not. I can declare war on rustling. Get the Enterprise on the phone. I'll go and dress-

DISSOLVE:

INT. JACK AND CECIL'S HOUSE.

Chain saws, oil cans, saddles, rifles and panniers. A bunk bed. A Montana state flag with miner's tools, a plough and a sunrise. JACK throws a copy of the Livingston Enterprise across the room. CECIL looks on.

JACK
Can you beat that! John Brown is worse than a Vigilante! That fucking ranch fascist has declared war on rustling in Park County. That's us!

CECIL
Before you whites came, we had a simple, nomadic existence in these shining mountains, under this big sky-

JACK
Horse shit-

CECIL
We had that too-

JACK
Your relatives were primarily honky tie-hackers from Iowa, bucktooth squaw humpers from the east...ah, well.

CECIL
(reflective:)
Sure was a mess with them ladies last night.

JACK
How'd you make out with Mary.

CECIL
Real great. She answered a lot of questions for me.

JACK
Like what?

CECIL
I found out that we are one with the universe.

JACK
Terrific.

CECIL
She found that out between licks at the direct-mail house in San Diego. We are one with the universe. Also, I learned to sing "Om, Om on the range".

JACK yells with laughter.

CECIL
What's the matter?

JACK
Funny, is all-Look, we have to jack up the ante here on John Brown.

CECIL
Let's burn his barn.

JACK
I mean it, Cecil.

CECIL
Let's burn and pillage.

JACK
Fuckin Indian. -I mean it. We can put a little spike camp in the National Forest. He's got BLM permits for summer grazing but we've got a right to camp there.

CECIL
Why would we do that?

JACK
We can case the joint.

CECIL
Case the joint-

JACK
We'll be California backpackers. We'll bring powdered food and chapsticks and just sit up there and have us a good look-see.

CECIL
That's a long walk.

JACK
All right, we'll take the horses.

CECIL
What about the ladies?

JACK
I don't think they'll talk to us. Maybe they will. I don't know. Let's try that, too.

CECIL
Are you interested in this livestock exposition?

JACK
You mean, now that we're in the cattle business?

INT. LIVESTOCK EXPOSITION OF THE NORTHERN ROCKIES.

What is on display here? As we move through the animals, we notice a weird parallelism with the humans.

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL.

We track with them from section to section: feeder cattle, select heifers, stock cows, horses: Arab, half-Arab, paint and quarter horses. Crowds of ranchers and cowpokes.

ANGLE

Tight on a circular face.

CIRCULAR FACE
You boys innerested in the Swine Show?

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL.

JACK AND CECIL
Sure am, sure are.

CIRCULAR FACE
Hampshire, Yorkshire, Berkshire, Spot Duroc or Poland?

JACK
Dammed if we know.

CECIL
Beats us.

CIRCULAR FACE
The swine show would be wasted on you boys then.

JACK AND CECIL
Thank you!

DISSOLVE:

Tight on a skinny face.

SKINNY FACE
You boys lookin to get out of the stock biness?

JACK AND CECIL
Sure am, sure are.

SKINNY FACE
Like to go to sunny Texas?

CECIL
Sure would.

SKINNY FACE
Well, I'm from Amarillo-Nomad Drilling and I'm looking for mud engineers, deisel mechanics, riggers, tool pushers, drillers and derrickmen. Either you boys fill any them bills?

JACK
No, sir.

CECIL
Sure don't.

ANGLE

A beauty contest: plastic cowgirls.

ANGLE

Five sullen Indians.

ANGLE

Cotton candy machine.

ANGLE

CIRCULAR FACE.

CIRCULAR FACE
You boys innerested in the Swine Show?

CECIL
You already asked.

CIRCULAR FACE
You lie.

JACK
Suppose?

CECIL
Jack, look-

ANGLE

Tight on a blue ribbon bull. There is about an inch of space between his underside and the floor. He is nearly perfectly square, solid and glossy. His balls are on file with Lloyd's Of London, along with Liberace's fingers and the passenger list of the Andrea Dorea.

PULL BACK

to include his owners, JOHN AND CORA BROWN; and a JUDGE with a sheet of paper and a microphone.

JUDGE
This fine bull, Baseheart-Of-Bozeman-Canyon, has compiled more than twice the points he needed here tonight to win this blue ribbon. He has tremendous thickness and length and by showtime checked in at sixteen hundred pounds. His mother at fourteen years of age is still running in the high country with her grandchildren. This bull has it all: size, bone, trimness and color. It just brings tears to my eyes. -John Brown, I wonder if you could say a word or two to Baseheart-Of-Bozeman-Canyon's admirers?

JOHN BROWN
Only to my fellow breeders, Bob. And to them, I would like to say that in twenty years of breeding from this stock I can count the steers on one hand. Our bull calves have, on the whole, grown up to be bulls.

APPLAUSE.

JOHN BROWN
We have the top matrons, the top sires. We raise very correct cattle at Lazy T-Bar J ranch. And if America
(MORE)

JOHN BROWN (Contd)
ever gets around to the same
with her citizens, maybe some
of these chain-saw rustlers
will let us show you some of
Baseheart-Of-Bozeman-Canyon's
grandsons!

GREAT LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE.

ANGLE

JACK moves to the front of the crowd to have a word with JOHN BROWN.

JACK
Excuse me, sir.

JOHN BROWN
Yes, sir-?

JACK
This might seem a little obvious
but do you try to maintain this
quality level with all of your
seed bulls?

JOHN BROWN
Oh, damn sure do.

JACK
All clear pedigrees?

JOHN BROWN
Absolutely.

JACK
All bulls performance tested
before you sell them?

JOHN BROWN
Yessir.

JACK
Semen tested?

JOHN BROWN
Yessir.

JACK
Certificates of soundness
from a reputable vet?

JOHN BROWN
You bet.

JACK
What's this baby here worth?

JOHN BROWN
About fifty thousand big ones.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS PARKING.

Night. Truck and car lights wheeling everywhere. A deluxe truck labelled LAZY T-BAR J, in letters identical to those on the helicopter. CURT and BURT climb out.

CURT
I don't know if the old bastard wants a ride home or not! Couldn't you've asked?

BURT
I was loading Baseheart-Of-Bozeman-Canyon, ass hole!

CURT
Well, let's go hunt him up and ask.

DISSOLVE:

The LAZY T-BAR J truck makes its way along the Interstate highway in the night.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK.

CECIL and JACK, riding and smoking cigarettes, Roy Acuff on the radio.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

The ranch helicopter in a remote canyon. It flies steadily until it runs out of canyon and lands. BURT and CURT get out and begin hiking out the way they came in.

EXT. AN ALPINE MEADOW.

JACK and CECIL, BETTY and MARY are skinny dipping in a mountain stream.

EXT. LAZY T-BAR J truck on the Interstate in broad daylight.

INT. TRUCK.

JOHN and CORA BROWN.

JOHN BROWN
I was tempted to leave either Curt or Burt out there and try to trap our boy. But I don't want to chance losing Baseheart.

CORA BROWN
I'm with you.

JOHN BROWN
Let's just hope.

CORA BROWN
(holds up a motel room key:)
What did the note say again? When we get in the room we'd get what, a clue?

JOHN BROWN
It said we'd get a complete description of Baseheart's whereabouts. It was right to the point about that.

EXT. ALPINE MEADOW.

JACK and CECIL get out of the stream.

CECIL
You ladies go on and swim or sunbathe or whatever does it for you. We're gonna try to glass some elk.

The two dress and saddle their two horses.

ANGLES

As they travel through trailless country, brush and blowndown timber.

ANGLE

They study the helicopter with binoculars.

DISSOLVE:

Still studying.

CECIL
I think we can go on down.

They go back into the trees where they've hidden their mounts, and start down.

ANGLE

The front desk of the Holiday Inn. A DESK CLERK is on duty as JOHN and CORA BROWN arrive.

JOHN BROWN
Someone has left something for us in room two twenty six. I'll leave the key with you in a minute- Whose name is that room checked out to.

DESK CLERK
(after looking:)
Mr. and Mrs. John Brown.

JOHN BROWN
I see.

DESK CLERK
I don't know who they are but I've had complaints. Real honeymooners apparently and they don't answer the phone.

EXT. HELICOPTER IN CANYON.

JACK hands CECIL money. CECIL packs saddlebags with same.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN. DOOR TO ROOM TWO TWENTY SIX.

JOHN and CORA BROWN arrive at the door. JOHN BROWN impatiently unlocks the door and opens it.

ANGLE

The brutal, sluggish immensity of Baseheart-Of-Bozeman-Canyon standing between the bed and the television.

EXT. ALPINE MEADOW.

JACK and CECIL ride up and secure their horses.

Shedding their clothes, they rejoin the girls in the stream.

JACK
This is it, Cecil. This is Rancho Deluxe. I don't know how to improve upon it.

CECIL
We may even have a future.

BETTY
Did you see some game?

CECIL
Sure did.

MARY
You ain't gonna poach none of it, I hope.

JACK
Not a chance.

WE BEGIN TO HEAR A LOW ROARING MECHANICAL NOISE. THE HELICOPTER?

JACK
What's that?

CECIL
Sounds like traffic.

They begin to climb out of the stream with alarm; when suddenly about twenty-five four wheel drive vehicles appear in the meadow, Land Rovers, Toyotas, Jeeps, International Scouts, Broncos, etc. They pour into the camp full of people cackling maniacally as JACK, CECIL, MARY and BETTY run for their clothes. All the vehicles have California license plates; and as they stop in the meadow, their drivers and passengers pile out wearing identical sweatshirts, emblazoned San Bernardino Four Wheel Drive Jamboree. This is the vulgarest gang of pigs and sweathogs ever to appear on the screen. Out of the lead vehicle, a command car emblazoned with stars, climbs the TRAIL BOSS; he is about 300 pounds and dressed in safari clothes. He walks over to the four while his twenty-five companions drag folded tents, barbecues and lawn chairs out into the meadow. As the TRAIL BOSS talks, the meadow is transformed into a slum. Hideous children seethe around and wrangle with each other.

TRAIL BOSS
Are those horses safe?

JACK
Like bunnies.

TRAIL BOSS
I'm the trail boss of this outfit. Hate to bust in on you here. But we ran a reconnaissance on this meadow almost a year ago all the way from San Bernardino. Are you sure those horses don't kick?

CECIL
They bite.

JACK
I think we'll just be moving along now.

TRAIL BOSS
It's too late to pick a new spot and these folks is trail weary and the kids is hungry-

ANGLE

One kid shoves his Eskimo Pie into another's face. We PAN across the trail weary in their sling chairs and lounges.

CECIL
We're gonna be goin. I think I know a meadow or two not on your war map-

TRAIL BOSS
Suit yourself. Watch it with those horses passing my people. As trail boss, I'm interested in the general wellbeing hereabouts-

FADE OUT.

EXT. TRAIL-HEAD AT TOM MINER BASIN.

The horses are loaded in two pickup trucks. The girls climb into one truck. JACK and CECIL stand at either window.

JACK
Your dad can unload the horses
for you-

BETTY
We'll do it. -Thanks for
the really nice time.

JACK
My pleasure, lady.

CECIL and MARY kiss.

JACK
See you on the weekend or
something. Keep tying them
good flies.

MARY
Can you pick me up at school?

CECIL
How old are you?

INT. PICKUP.

Rolling along the big, windblown valley toward Livingston.

JACK
What you got in mind this
week?

CECIL
I'm gonna spend some time
with my old man.

JACK
That is remarkable.

CECIL
Why do you say that?

JACK
I been thinking about
visiting _my_ folks.

CECIL
(surprised:)
Is that right?

JACK
I been _thinking_ about it.
(MORE)

JACK (Contd)
Plus, I might as well. I don't see how we're going to top this week's performance. And we sure don't need the money. Let's take a vacation.

CECIL
You know what?

JACK
?

CECIL
My grandfather was a cattle thief too, my maternal grandfather. He had a corral for stolen stock near Wolf Point. He was hung by Stuart's Stranglers. They left him in the cottonwoods for a summer just for crow bait. They had pinned a note on his coat that said, "Three-seven-seventy seven" which are the official dimensions for a grave.

JACK
Lucky he got to your grandma before then or you wouldn't be here today to help with that chain saw.

DISSOLVE:

INT. CECIL'S FAMILY'S HOUSE.

A bright, early morning. CECIL barges in on his father curled up on the couch.

CECIL
Come on, old man! We're gonna float the river.

MR. COLSON
Aw Cece, I don't half feel up to it.

CECIL
Shit you don't! I got the picnic and I caught about a hundred big hoppers.

MR. COLSON
You got a raft to use?

CECIL
I just bought a dandy new
Arkansas johnboat.

DISSOLVE:

CECIL pushing the johnboat off into the river. His father sits in the stern and CECIL steps aboard in his waders. We watch as the boat slides away on the current and begins to drop in the first spangling rapids, through willows and cottonwoods, along green, glossy bends of deep water.

DISSOLVE:

The tarmac at a gargantuan airport. A 747 is landing toward us, huge swept wings dropped slightly behind it as it descends before its own opaque curtain of exhaust.

The enormous multiple wheels touch, smoke and roll. As the plane taxis toward us THE UNEARTHLY SCREAM OF ITS ENGINES BUILDS IN PITCH. This strikes us like a scene from another movie.

Innumerable passengers disembark. We pick up one and track back with him: JACK MCKEE.

ANGLE

JACK at the gate as he greets his parents, exchanges hugs and handshakes. MR. and MRS. MCKEE are products of extreme mercantile prosperity. The three talk excitedly. But we can't hear them over the engines.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. A STATELY AUTOMOBILE.

as it swoops and bends through an elegant suburb. We look through the windshield at the three McKees talking but we cannot hear them over the smooth surge of the engine of the stately automobile.

EXT. GRAVEL BAR ON THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER.

CECIL beaches the johnboat and helps his father climb out. He draws the boat high up on the gravel.

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CECIL

We'll eat here, take a little snooze then fish on down to Carter bridge. Go ahead with what you were saying-

MR. COLSON

After I left Fort Belknap-

CECIL

Yeah.

MR. COLSON

This was the late thirties. I went up and worked on the Fort Peck dam. Then I moved down to the dam quarries as dynamiter. I wintered in Wolf Point and met the daughter of a deceased cow thief. We took my construction money and went on a little vacation-

CECIL

Where?

MR. COLSON

Miami.

CECIL

Miami!

MR. COLSON

Went broke, got married-

CECIL

Is that where that sea shell collection in the garage is from?

MR. COLSON

Yeah, you knew that, didn't you? -Let's see, went broke, got married, went to work for the railroad. At that time, the Department of Agriculture was encouraging people to get some land and run a little combination farm. So, we got some land and ran a little combination farm. Had pigs, cows and chickens. Raised two kinds of

(MORE)

MR. COLSON (Contd)
wheat: Number One Heavy Dark Northern Spring and Number One Dark Hard Winter. Two good wheats. What are these?

CECIL
They're all bacon, lettuce and tomato.

MR. COLSON
We couldn've eaten them hoppers. The old boys on the reservation used to eat grasshoppers. They're full of nourishment. Supposed to taste good too.

CECIL
Let's find out.

He gets the bait can out of the boat, takes out a grasshopper and eats it.

MR. COLSON
Damn, Cecil!

CECIL
Not bad. -Daddy, that's what our forebears done.

MR. COLSON
Some of them, Cecil. We was supposed to have had some royalty in there too. The Prince of Angolia or somethin. You're not doing no crime or nothin- No offense intended.

CECIL
I don't know what you mean.

MR. COLSON
I mean, there ain't no visible means of support and...this boat, y'know and that jazzy pickup truck.

CECIL
I had about a hundred fifty different jobs in the last month.

MR. COLSON
All right. Now let me tell you another thing. I seen more of this state's poor, cowboys, miners, railroaders and Indians, go broke buyin new pickup trucks. *The poor* people *in* this state are dope fiends for pickup trucks. The minute they get ten cents ahead, they trade in on a new pickup truck. The families, homesteads, schools, *hospitals* and happiness of Montana have been sold down the river to buy pickup trucks. It is a sickness here worse than alcohol and dope. It is the pickup truck death and there is no cure in sight.

CECIL
Well, I do see what you mean. Really. But I own this one in partners with Jack. And we do a good deal of hauling with it.

MR. COLSON
You don't have to explain it to me. I'm just warning you. I nearly wrecked our home with them. Look, just go down to the city dump or look along the river here and you'll see that for fifty years the people of Montana have been beating themselves to death with pickup trucks.

CECIL
You want the rest of this?

MR. COLSON
I'm full, Cece, thanks.

DISSOLVE:

From above, the two men napping on the gravel bar.

DISSOLVE:

The johnboat dropping through sparkling channels. Deer and small game appear along the shore. They pass under high cliffs and through cattle pasture.

ANGLE

A bend in the river, rip-rapped with rusty pickup trucks.

MR. COLSON
See? That there is forty
years of Montana history.

We stop. They coast away from us into the glitter.

FADE OUT.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF THE MCKEE HOUSE.

JACK sits with his parents in an *elegant, beautiful* room; crystal, dark wood, paintings, silk, and like that. His father pours the three of them glasses of sherry and sits down.

MR. MCKEE
What inspires you to this
unexpected visit?

JACK
Sentiment.

MR. MCKEE
Well, I'm glad you have some
for us.

MRS. MCKEE
As dull as that sounds. Are
you still with the railroad?

JACK
No, cattle.

MR. MCKEE
Where?

JACK
Right outside of Livingston.
A place called Rancho Deluxe.

MRS. MCKEE
Is it really called that?

JACK
Yup.

MR. MCKEE
How droll. -What are you doing?

JACK
I'm a hand.

MR. MCKEE
You're gonna have to work your way up, if you're planning to be a rancher. I had my physical last week and I passed with flying colors.

JACK
I know you're joking; but I did tell you, I don't want your money. At all.

MRS. MCKEE
God, this gives me fits of deja vu. Let's not have another word about that. We have a good dinner planned and a surprise for you, Jack.

INT. DINING ROOM.

MRS. MCKEE checks the table arrangement with a servant. She hears THE DOORBELL RING and goes to the door of the dining room.

MRS. MCKEE
Jack! Get the front door would you?

ANGLE

Hold an instant on MRS. MCKEE as her face tightens very slightly.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY.

JACK opens the door. A beautiful girl named ANNA stands there, a little frightened looking. This is a moment of some enormity.

JACK
Hello, Anna.

ANNA
Hello...

DISSOLVE:

INT. DINING ROOM.

The conclusion of dinner. There is nothing for a long moment but the desultory CLINKING OF SILVERWARE. MRS. MCKEE rises quite suddenly. Her husband stands a minute later.

MRS. MCKEE
We're going to leave you two alone. Jack, I know - I - I can see that you really question my judgement in this.

JACK
That's right, mother.

MR. MCKEE
Now look, pal-

JACK
Get out.

THE MCKEES stand a moment.

JACK
Did you hear me?

They go.

JACK
I don't know why they did this.

ANNA
I'm glad they did. They left it up to me and I came. I wanted to see you. I wanted to look at you.

JACK
It makes it harder, Anna. I had just gotten to the point that I could come here at all. I had just risen to that.

ANNA
When will it go away.

JACK
I don't know.

ANNA

How do you like being single?

JACK

I guess it's the only way I can live. -I thought you'd have remarried by now.

ANNA

No. -Jack?

JACK

What?

ANNA

Couldn't I come and see you?

JACK

Why! So we can work on each other again? So we can lock ourselves in the house for a week again and crawl around and weep and take tranquillizers again and talk about suicide and pointlessness? You want to call up your school girl-friends in the middle of the night and cry for them again? Huh?

She shakes her head, starting to cry.

JACK

Don't you understand yet that we make each other insane? Don't you? The last week we spent together you were too crazy to wash your face! I had to brush the knots out of your hair. We mutilate each other.

ANNA

I still love you.

JACK

I don't care! I love you too and I don't want any more I can't stand any more-

He tears everything off the table. ANNA covers her weeping face as he smashes and throws everything around the dining room, in an explosion of energy that suggests madness.

JACK (Contd)
-can't stand any more and don't want...aw God...

EXT. SATURDAY NIGHT IN LIVINGSTON, MONTANA.

The streets are full of cowboys, merchants, ranchers; heads, hats and faces foreshortened as they move toward us. Highschoolers circle the blocks between Main and Second perpetually, in everything from raked funny-cars with huge carbeurator scoops in the hoods to the old trucks of the ranch kids. We pick up two faces, CURT and BURT and begin to TRACK back with them. They fill the screen and pass us. We pick up two more faces, JACK and CECIL. We TRACK back until they fill the screen and pass. Reverse: CURT and BURT walk down the street to the Wrangler Bar and turn in, stalked by JACK and CECIL.

INT. WRANGLER BAR.

A bar in transition. The only bar in Livingston where freaks, railroaders and cowboys don't try to eat each other alive. There is a front room with a long wooden bar; and a dance floor with tables. A band plays a weird mixture of rock-and-roll and country music, like the Byrds, Commander Cody or the Flying Burrito Brothers. A lot of bar games, three pool tables; and an ungodly amount of ass walking around.

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL lean backwards on their elbows, on the bar.

JACK
Are you sure that's them.

CECIL
As sure as shootin-

JACK
Is that pretty sure?

CECIL
That's real sure.

DISSOLVE:

BURT and CECIL playing pool.

BURT

Okay, now you owe me nineteen beers.

CECIL

Good thing I don't make my living at this. The only thing my mother ever taught me about pool is don't scratch the eight-ball.

BURT

You're not that bad. If you'd just play for shape instead of blasting away. Are you Indian?

CECIL

Part.

BURT

Well, Indians never get too good at pool. I thought maybe you were Jewish. Or a greaser.

DISSOLVE:

CURT and JACK playing Pong an electronic bar game. They sit side by side facing a lighted screen.

JACK

As you were saying.

CURT

Well, it's just that old John Brown has seized on t this rustling because he is kind of sad and bored and this sleuthin around excites him.

JACK

What about the stock detective-

CURT

Well, John has gone and hired this Henry Beige. He'll be here tomorrow. He's out of Two-Dot, Montana and has a great reputation. He's pretty

(MORE)

CURT (Contd)
old and he's bringing his niece to take care of him.

JACK
What I mean is, won't that kind of ruin John Brown's fun?

CURT
I was thinkin the same thing. I hope not. He's been sleepin nights lately instead of ramblin around the ranch yard with insomnia. When we recovered Baseheart-Of-Bozeman-Canyon, he was happier than if we'd never lost him. The ransom on that sonofabitch made every stockman's paper in the country and every regular paper in the West.

JACK
Do you think it's the same rustlers? *We been reading* about it.

CURT
I know who it is.

JACK
...you do?

CURT
Sure I do. You got another quarter?

JACK
Here. For what?

CURT
To play another game. I beat you two straight and we're playing best out of five for Championship of the Universe.

JACK
Well, who is it?

CURT
Who's what?

JACK
That's rustlin your stock off.

CURT
Come on, Jack.

JACK
Tell me.

CURT
It's you.

JACK
Seriously.

CURT
I am serious. You're the rustler.

JACK
What makes you talk this way?

CURT
Well, Burt and me told the old man we wanted one more chance to catch the culprits before Henry Beige come down from Two Dot. We told him we wanted to come to town and run down some leads. It was the only way we were gonna get the night off. And since you and Cecil are the only people we've talked to, you're gonna have to be the hot leads. But I have to believe you're the rustlers or my conscience will hurt me and all I want to do is drink and play these bar games.

JACK
Well, you are a real and I mean *real Christian. Anybody* else would have just snuck to town. Whereas with you, a good conscience is so important, you get right in there and persecute a couple of innocents.

CURT
I was raised that way.

JACK
We all were.

INT. SALLY'S.

ANGLE

Tight on old lady with short blue hair.

SALLY

I believe in fun. I believe in havin it all now. I believe in hygiene and a good old time. I believe in gettin it while you can.

JACK (OVER)

What don't you believe in, Sal.

SALLY

I don't believe in lettin your meat loaf.

ANGLE

Two long couches, end to end, with a big American flag and a big Montana state flag on the wall behind. Seated on the couches, all in a row, are fifteen whores of every variety known.

ANGLE

To include JACK, CECIL, BURT, CURT.

JACK

Sally, I brought two celebrity friends of mine-

SALLY

Jack, I know who they are. The are Burt and Curt of the Lazy T.

BURT and CURT are drunk.

JACK

Well, anyway-

SALLY

Let me tell you. We are still offerin the standard jobs and acts at standard rates, though the livestock has picked up in quality. Even so, we have not raised the price of round-the-world, half-and-half, your

(MORE)

SALLY (Contd)
straight-shot. We have cancelled the old Hershey highway and are still willing to negotiate on circuses, harems, sultan's slavery or any kind of freeform fandango somebody might invent for hisself.

CECIL
Well, we promised Burt and Curt a treat. So let them pick and we'll cover it.

BURT
We want em all.

CURT
Yeah.

JACK
It's yours. Our word is good.

SALLY
That's gonna spoil three hundred dollars.

JACK
We bought it Sally. Cece and I are men of our word. Why don't you get in there and raise it to three and a quarter.

SALLY
Who's gonna answer the phone?

The whores start to get to their feet. One of them speaks.

WHORE
Let's get started with the wear and tear.

JACK peels off some hundreds as BURT, CURT and the fifteen whores pour out of the room.

DISSOLVE:

The two whorehouse couches: CECIL asleep on one, JACK asleep on the other. BURT and CURT wander in, drunk and exhausted.

BURT
You want to wake these rustlers up?

CURT
They sure was generous-

BURT
They are good boys, no question. Let's wake em. We'll buy em some breakfast at the railroad cafe.

DISSOLVE:

INT. THE RAILROAD CAFE.

It is four in the morning. JACK, CECIL, BURT and CURT are gobbling enormous breakfasts of steak, eggs, hash-browns, juice and coffee.

JACK
(mouth full of food:)
How do you feel about your wages up there?

BURT
It's the way of life more than the salary.

JACK
Come on, answer seriously.

BURT
Wages is lousy. Two fifty a month, room and board. And Miz Brown makes the food too spicey.

CURT
Why do you ask. You rustlers lookin for some inside help?

All four burst into laughter. BURT and CURT are laughing sincerely though. JACK and CECIL don't seem to be enjoying their laughter nearly as much.

JACK
Well, that'd be fun to talk about anyway.

CURT
Sure it would.

CECIL
Just to help us stay awake.

DISSOLVE:

Same; but many empty plates have been cleared aside. There are impromptu maps drawn all over the napkins.

JACK
My concern in whether or not we can turn a semi around on the upper pasture road.

CURT
We'll check it out and if it don't look too neat, Curt and I'll take the tractor and make a turnaround.

BURT
Now you do know, don't you, that you're gonna have to take the load a good ways east to get away from brand inspection-

JACK
I know.

CURT
And the split is a simple four-way.

JACK
Absolutely.

BURT
I think we got a deal then.

They stand up, scattering change on the table.

CECIL
What about this stock detective.

BURT
No problem. I recommended him to Brown.

JACK
Is he honest?

BURT
As the day is long. But he
retired before the last war.
He can't hardly get from room
to room. He still don't believe
he's got the job.

They walk to the door.

BURT
Come on out to the truck
with us for a sec.

EXT. RAILROAD CAFE PARKING LOT.

The four arrive at the Lazy T-Bar J pickup truck. BURT leans over and reaches into the bed. He pulls out a large piece of cow hide and hands it to JACK.

BURT
You left that down to the
locker plant. If you're
gonna have a sport coat
made out of it, why don't
you go on and have that
brand removed first.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

CORA BROWN is putting a big birthday cake on the table. JOHN BROWN comes in and they stand shoulder to shoulder looking toward the dining room door.

JOHN BROWN
Where is the geezer?

CORA BROWN
He's coming. His niece is
helping him come up from the
bunkhouse.

JOHN BROWN
Jesus Cora, he doesn't even
look mobile.

CORA BROWN
Well, we're paying him a
percentage on recoveries
and preventions. So, if he
(MORE)

CORA BROWN (Contd)

doesn't work out, it's only going to cost us his board. Here he comes. Let's start in.

JOHN AND CORA BROWN

*Happy birthday to you,*
*Happy birthday to you,*
*Happy birthday Henry Beige,*
*Happy birthday to you!*

HENRY BEIGE and his niece LAURA enter. HENRY BEIGE is incredibly old and decrepit. He walks with two canes, wears a huge open crown Stetson like an old fashioned Indian and carries a gun. LAURA is a sweetly pretty mountain girl in her late teens or early twenties. She helps HENRY BEIGE as he enters the room. Disgust flickers over his face at the song and the cake. They all sit down.

HENRY BEIGE

Last time anybody baked a cake for me, I drew on the sumbitch and blew frosting clear into the parlor. That was in twenty eight. I was thirty eight.

CORA BROWN

Why did you shoot the cake, Mr. Beige?

HENRY BEIGE

I wasn't hungry.

CORA BROWN

If you shoot this cake, Mr. Beige, I'll either shoot you or whip your head with one of your canes.

HENRY BEIGE smiles.

HENRY BEIGE

In that case, I will dig in gratefully.

JOHN BROWN

Laura, what do you do with yourself when you aren't lending your Uncle Henry a helping hand?

LAURA
I help my mom.

CORA BROWN
And what about when you're not helping her?

LAURA
I go over to the Senior Citizens and help the old folks.

CORA BROWN
In Livingston?

LAURA
No, ma'am, in Choteau.

CORA BROWN
What else do you do?

LAURA
I sew.

CORA BROWN
What do you sew?

LAURA
I just like to make nice things for nice folks.

JOHN BROWN
You're a remarkable girl, Laura.

LAURA
All I want is for folks to be happy.
(she bursts into song:)
It's a big, wide, wonderful world we live in!

HENRY BEIGE
Can it, Laura, we're eatin.

A gross pause.

JOHN BROWN
You always been a stock detective, Mr. Beige?

HENRY BEIGE
No.

JOHN BROWN
What'd you do before that?

HENRY BEIGE
I was a horse thief. That's why I made such a good stock detective. At one time I had four hundred stolen horses in my corrals on the Sixteen Mile River. I would put them on the electric train in Ringling, transfer them to the Northern Pacific in Maudlow and ship them to a four state area within forty eight hours. I could move a horse faster than an airmail letter. I was the very best.

JOHN BROWN
Why did you quit?

HENRY BEIGE
I got caught and sent to Deer Lodge penetentiary. I broke horses for the prison ranch for three years while everybody was havin such a fine time in World War Two. When I realized that thievery had cost me the circus of the century, I decided to work on the other side of the law.

DISSOLVE:

Same. Everybody heading out the door. LAURA hangs back.

JOHN BROWN
Mr. Beige, let's get you acclimated to the Lazy T-Bar J. This country's a little steeper than what you're used to-

They go out. LAURA waits a minute. We track with her as she goes into the kitchen. She looks around and finds what she wants, an open fifth of Jim Beam bourbon. She chugs about six quick ounces and hurries out after the others.

DISSOLVE:

JOHN and CORA BROWN standing out in their orchard.

JOHN BROWN

How long has Mr. Beige been here now?

CORA BROWN

I don't know, seven days.

JOHN BROWN

He hasn't even been out of bed in that time but about ten minutes.

CORA BROWN

I know. We haven't lost any stock either.

JOHN BROWN

The last time I saw him on his feet was four days ago. That little simp Laura brings him his food three times a day.

CORA BROWN

Mr. Beige told me that very often his mere presence puts an end to rustling. His reputation precedes him evidently.

JOHN BROWN

I don't know why, Cora. I just sort of feel like we been had.

CORA BROWN

To me, the worst of it is the way Curt and Burt follow Laura around. We're not getting half the use out of them we once did.

JOHN BROWN

I'm afraid the two chimps are in love. They come knuckling out of the bunkhouse in the morning trying to beat one another to Laura's side to help carry Mr. Beige's breakfast to him.

CORA BROWN
Darling?

JOHN BROWN
What, hon?

CORA BROWN
Are you ever sorry we got out of the beauty-parlor business? Gee, I miss Schenectady sometimes.

DISSOLVE:

JACK and CECIL standing next to the pickup truck. CECIL is loading the Sharps buffalo gun.

CECIL
I just have to know what this bastard can do, Jack.

He raises the gun to position, breathes deeply twice, holds his breath and fires. The gun goes off with AN UNHOLY ROAR and knocks CECIL on his ass.

ANGLE

A steer tips over dead. A STEADY DRONING ROAR BEGINS TO BE HEARD.

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL at the truck.

JACK
Get in the truck!

ANGLE

The helicopter bursting out of the canyon and coming toward them.

ANGLE

The two jump in the truck. The truck starts, revs up and spins in a circle and starts down the forest service road.

The helicopter closes in.

The truck explodes from bump to gully, sliding, minimal control.

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL'S point-of-view, the road rising, jarring and disappearing in the windshield. CECIL slides the SHARPS out the window.

JACK
Cecil! Jesus, no!

ANGLE

The helicopter is straight overhead.

JACK suddenly leaves the road, breaks through the barbed wire, heads straight out across open pasture, brakes and drives into the forest beyond. He stops.

ANGLE

INT. PICKUP: JACK and CECIL breathing heavily.

JACK
They won't be able to follow us in these trees.

CECIL
That's true. But then what?

JACK
I don't know. We're trapped on the Lazy T.

A hand holding a gun appears in each window.

A VOICE
Get on out. With your hands in the air.

JACK and CECIL glance at each other and climb out.

ANGLE

The moment they get out: it's BURT and CURT. They burst into insane laughter.

BURT
(collecting himself:)
I thought you ought to know what bad planning feels like.

JACK
You made your point.

CURT
Boys, I got a question. When we are fixing to *skate off* with a semi truck load of two year olds, why are you up here penny-anteing like this for one steer.

JACK
Sport.

BURT
Sport?

JACK
Yeah, me and Cecil are sportsmen.

BURT
Is that sorta like a nimrod?

JACK
Somewhere along in there, wise guy.

BURT
Well, let me tell you, wise guy. We have to go up and get Mr. Henry Beige now and take him to the kill. Because I don't know what you were shooting with but you could for sure hear it at the ranch.

DISSOLVE:

Tight on HENRY BEIGE, his canes lying to one side, as he straddles the dead steer and probes with his pocket knife, and a long stick.

HENRY BEIGE
I don't know what this steer been shot with but it has gone clean through him. My curiosity is up. This steer has been killed with either a bazooka or an express train. -Here we got 'er, now.

He digs out the enormous bullet. We PULL BACK to include BURT, CURT, LAURA and the BROWNS.

HENRY BEIGE (Contd)
If I wasn't so old, I wouldn't know what this was.

JOHN BROWN
What is it, Mr. Beige?

HENRY BEIGE
It's a fifty caliber bullet.

JOHN BROWN
From what kind of gun?

HENRY BEIGE
From a Sharps Buffalo rifle. Things is gettin downright romantic.

FADE OUT.

INT. THE LINCOLN WITH THE HORSESHOE HOOD ORNAMENT.

BETTY and MARY. They are all dressed up, BETTY in a fancy cowgirl outfit, MARY in Haight-Ashberry gypsy magnificence.

BETTY
I don't know what these boys got in mind. But it's a good sign they wanted us to dress up. They're nice boys all right but I sure don't need to get grossed out again.

MARY
Cecil doesn't gross me out at all. He is an Indian and he's extremely spiritual. What'd you tell daddy?

BETTY
I said we was going to the *Shining Mountain Ladies Club.*

MARY
Very imaginative, Betty.

BETTY
Old Jack, he says to me, 'Betty, we haven't spent a dime on you ladies. Let's us have a real evening!'

ANGLE

Lincoln pulls up in front of JACK and CECIL'S place.

ANGLE

The girls at the door. JACK and CECIL open it.

INT. JACK and CECIL'S place.

As the girls enter: JACK and CECIL are startlingly dressed-up. The living room has been cleared and a small orchestra in folding chairs begins to play the first of an incessant string of *waltzes and schmaltz* hit-parade specials. There is a table opposite the orchestra with four chairs and a linen table cloth; it has been elegantly set for dinner.

DISSOLVE:

The four are seated and A WAITER is serving them dinner, pheasants, an elegantly small suckling pig, and various unidentified objects flambeau. The orchestra continues; occasionally, a member of it - a violinist or a trumpeter - breaks away and circles the table, a real minstrel. JACK stands and walks around pouring wine for everyone.

MARY
This is a weird mixture of
Yin and Yang. So many animal
karmas have bit the dust here.

BETTY
Just eat, Mary.

MARY
Bite my ass, Betty.

JACK
Ladies-

BETTY
Take yer hand out of my
crotch, Jack.

JACK
Ssh, Betty! The orchestra heard
you.

MARY
Betty's so spiritual.

BETTY

You boys really had to lay
it out for this party. I'm
impressed.

JACK

I'm glad Betty.

BETTY

I mean, it's kind of a dumb
idea but I'm impressed.

DISSOLVE:

The same but drunker. The four complete a waltz and sit down.

BETTY

Play a polka!

The orchestra breaks into a horrific polka and BETTY gets, somehow, to her feet. CECIL and MARY kiss and slide out of the chairs onto the floor. BETTY begins to dance by herself, an embarrassing, even vulgar, polka. THE WAITER comes in and, stepping over the writhing couple, starts to clear the table. The WAITER is very formally dressed as a waiter in a kind of penguin suit. BETTY continues dancing the awful polka as we close in on her isolation.

ANGLE

JACK watching, smoking, smiling.

DISSOLVE:

SILENCE. The orchestra is asleep, instruments in laps. The table is cleared and the WAITER, now dressed in cowboy clothes, sleeps with his head on the table. JACK and CECIL, MARY and BETTY are nowhere in sight. We hold on this still-life.

A bedroom door opens and CECIL wanders in, in his underwear.

CECIL

Hey! Wake up, you guys, it's
almost morning. I didn't know
you were still here. Come on,
get up and go home.

CECIL passes on into the bathroom. The orchestra and the WAITER slowly stir.

DISSOLVE:

The bedroom: the four sound asleep. It is pale, early morning. Another still-life. It looks like four sleeping children.

ANGLE

THEIR DAD in the doorway. He stands there staring.

ANGLE

The four stir and begin to wake up.

ANGLE

THEIR DAD in the doorway with a POLICE OFFICER.

THEIR DAD
(loud, firm voice:)
You may go, officer. I have recovered my Lincoln Continental Mark Four. Come in, mother, and have a look.

The POLICEMAN goes. THEIR MOM enters.

THEIR DAD
Come in, Missus Fargo.

THE BOSS-LADY at the fly factory enters. The girls by this time are sitting up in terror, holding sheets over themselves.

THEIR DAD
Come on in Uncle Ramsey and Aunt Bee and see the floozies- and whoremongers.

Two more enter.

THEIR DAD
Grandma and Grandpa Hooper, don't hold back. Come on up and see what the world has come to.

An embarrassed elderly COUPLE are herded into the room.

ANGLE

Tight on THEIR DAD. He is small and perfect. His expensive western clothes and Dobbs hat are all clean and precisely fitted. He begins to rave.

THEIR DAD
Filth and evil is one subject
I'm slow to tolerate-

JACK (OVER)
That's two subjects-

THEIR DAD
Son, you are in a dangerous
country and I advise-

A LOUD EXPLOSION. We are still tight on THEIR DAD as part of the doorway overhead is blown to splinters.

ANGLE

As JACK clambers out of bed in his drawers. He holds a Smith and Wesson 357 Magnum in his right hand.

JACK
I knew if I kept this by my
bed long enough some mother
fucking worm would turn up in
here. It's what they call self-
fulfilling prophecy. Now get
on your knees you sorry son of
a bitch.

THEIR DAD hesitates.

JACK
Faster! I am in a bad mood-

THEIR DAD drops to his knees.

JACK
Now fold your hands before you
and beg your daughters for
forgiveness.

THEIR DAD hesitates.

JACK
FAST you sonofabitch or I will
blow you to kingdom come!

THEIR DAD
Forgive me girls.

JACK
More sincerity, god damn it!

THEIR DAD
Please girls please forgive
me for what I done.

JACK
Now let me point out that
if you had any moral right
to come in here and do this
you wouldn't be such a coward
as to fall on your knees at
my command no matter how many
guns I had.

GRANDMA HOOPER
That boy is one hundred percent
right and I don't care who hears
me say it! You had no right,
Wilbur!

JACK
I knew you knew better, Grandma.
It's these World War One war-
babies we're having so much
trouble with. -Cecil, get
everything we need here out to
the truck.

DISSOLVE:

The living room. THEIR DAD, THEIR MOM, GRANDMA AND GRANDPA HOOPER, THE FLY FACTORY BOSS LADY, UNCLE RAMSEY AND AUNT BEE are all seated exactly where the orchestra had been. BETTY and MARY are sitting at the dinner table. JACK sits with the gun by himself watching everyone. CECIL passes back and forty carrying things out to the truck like the Sharps rifle and the chain saw. The four, of course, are dressed now. CECIL walks in, finished.

CECIL
All done.

JACK
All right. Now, if anyone
follows in the next hour or
two, they are just liable to
find me in the front yard
with this nasty looking heater
in my hand.
(MORE)

JACK (Contd)
(to THEIR DAD:)
And as for you chicken-shit, think twice before you prefer charges. Because if you do, tell them to catch me quick cause I'm gonna come looking for you.

DISSOLVE:

JACK and CECIL at the pickup truck and the Lincoln.

CECIL
Jack, follow me. I'm gonna take a ride in this Lincoln Continental Mark Four.

ANGLES ON TRAVEL

The pickup truck following the Lincoln Continental. We watch from afar as the two vehicles wander through the mountains, through high pastures, and along rattling alpine streams.

DISSOLVE:

The Lincoln sits in total isolation out in the middle of desolate rangeland. We hold on it as though it were a piece of sculpture. A SHOT RINGS OUT and its windshield shatters. ANOTHER RINGS OUT, and a tire collapses.

ANGLE

CECIL and JACK an amazing distance from the Lincoln. CECIL is firing the Sharps.

CECIL
No wonder them old boys had such reputations. This is an amazing piece.

ANGLE

A BULLET SCREAMS through the rear window and out the right vent.

DISSOLVE:

The Lincoln in the rain. Another sculptural study. This time, a study in the final elaboration of Swiss cheese.

Four very old cowboys ride up in the rain, ancient men. They are wearing long black slickers that glisten in the rain. They look like druids in the pale rainy light. They gather around the Lincoln and study it. We hold a long, eerie moment.

EXT. THE BROWN'S GARDEN

as CURT and LAURA arrive.

CURT
Missus Brown wants me to do some of this weeding.

LAURA
Gardens are so pretty.

CURT
With all this excitement over the rustlers, nobody has bothered to weed.

LAURA
Somebody better thin out that lettuce or it's all going to smother itself.

CURT
I'll do that too.

LAURA
Who'd you say planted this garden?

CURT
Missus Brown.

LAURA
Well, she's a jerk.

CURT
What...?

He sits up from his weeding.

LAURA
That's just an expression I heard. I, well I think this garden is not quite laid out right.

CURT
Laura, I got a crush on you.

LAURA
Burt!

CURT
Curt-

LAURA
I mean that, I mean "Curt".

CURT
You're so sweet and innocent and yet, and yet you always seem to got something in your mind. Would you consider going for a walk with me?

EXT. RANCH YARD.

The Lazy T-Bar J pickup swirls into the driveway. JOHN BROWN jumps out and heads for the house.

INT. RANCHHOUSE.

As JOHN BROWN enters, BURT and CORA BROWN are playing backgammon.

JOHN BROWN
I just picked up an interesting piece of information you'd practically pay to hear.

CORA BROWN
John Cameron Swazie hopscotching the world for news.

JOHN BROWN
Burt, go get Mister Beige.

BURT goes out.

JOHN BROWN
Wait'll you get a load of this.

CORA BROWN
Tell me now.

JOHN BROWN
This is going to just make you twitch.

ANGLE

BURT and HENRY BEIGE walking toward the house.

HENRY BEIGE is wearing some kind of dressing gown, his cowboy hat and is walking, as usual, with two canes.

HENRY BEIGE
I hate for someone to barge in on me when I'm dreaming.

BURT
How could I tell that. You were sitting up in front of the TV. Now how could I tell you were having a dream?

ANGLE

as they walk into the ranch house.

JOHN BROWN
Mister Beige, I've got a bit of news for you.

HENRY BEIGE
That's nice. I don't get a paper.

JOHN BROWN
(to CORA BROWN:)
You guys using the same gag book?

HENRY BEIGE
What's the news?

JOHN BROWN
Well, it seems an abandoned Lincoln Continental has been found in an open field up the Shields valley.

HENRY BEIGE
So?

JOHN BROWN
It was full of bullet holes.

HENRY BEIGE
Why's that?

JOHN BROWN
For no apparent reason. But the bullets which did the work might interest you.

HENRY BEIGE
Why?

JOHN BROWN
They're from a fifty caliber Sharps buffalo rifle.

HENRY BEIGE
I see. Is that all?

JOHN BROWN
Yes...

HENRY BEIGE
I think I'll head back to the bunkhouse before I lose track of this dream. I was dreaming I was in ancient Egypt and this pharoah-

JOHN BROWN
Wait a minute now Henry. Try to focus here a minute.

HENRY BEIGE
I got the picture. This Lincoln was shot with the same kind of gun that killed your steer-

JOHN BROWN
Mister Beige, if this doesn't interest you, I hope you won't be offended if _I_ pursue it.

HENRY BEIGE
No, that's fine. -But there was one incredible thing I have to find out.

CORA BROWN
What's that?

HENRY BEIGE
Was I just a commoner?

CORA BROWN
I don't follow-

HENRY BEIGE
I mean, was I just a commoner or was I actually a member of
(MORE)

HENRY BEIGE (Contd)
the pharoah's royal family. I remember me and the pharoah was standing on this pyramid as if we'd known each other for years and years-

ANGLE

LAURA runs through the woods. CURT tries to keep up. LAURA runs and leaps carefree as a beer ad. CURT follows muttering to himself.

CURT
Beautiful. She's like a flower or a fawn. She's so carefree, so- she's almost like Bambi-

LAURA runs toward us, stopping only as she totally fills the view, and holds up a bunch of flowers to CURT.

CURT
Aw gee I-

LAURA
Take them. God made them.

CURT
Aw, thank you.

LAURA
They're for you.

CURT
I- I've got them now, thanks.

ANGLE

CURT sitting at the base of a tree. LAURA is standing in front of him, facing us.

CURT
Laura?

LAURA'S eyes raise very slightly, maybe roll very slightly too.

LAURA
Yes, Curt?

He rises to his feet.

CURT

Could we kiss?

LAURA

Yes, Curt. But Curt?

CURT

Yes, Laura?

LAURA

I- I don't think I'm too good. You'll show me, won't you?

CURT takes LAURA in his arms. They kiss. In a moment, LAURA begins running her hands through his hair, thoroughly mussing the lonesome cowpoke. Then gradually she begins to sink, purposefully sliding down his body and out of the frame. Might pause here to study CURT'S joyous incredulity.

DISSOLVE:

JACK and CECIL camped next to their truck on a high slope from which they can view the Yellowstone Valley and about six loops of the river itself. They are each sitting against a wheel of the truck, drinking coffee. Their view is vast and beautiful.

CECIL

Nature is a real mother. A real motha, I should say. Motha Nature.

JACK

Have you noticed something, Bro'. Neither one of us is working for The Man. That alone justifies the life of crime.

CECIL

I think you're right. I was thinking about when we worked for the railroad. You was up knocking down ice. And I was in the switching yards, out all winter, shunting trains around. Sure couldn't get near this.

JACK

We do have a little problem though. We have got to score

(Contd)

JACK (Contd)
a semi and if we can't get back into Livingston, I don't know how to do it.

CECIL
Why don't we just go in and get one.

JACK
What about the girl's dad?

CECIL
That's the chance we take. I mean, we have to bet on ourselves.

JACK
I can't follow you.

CECIL
Well, you told him not to report us. And he did everything else you told him. So we have to figure he'll keep on like that.

JACK
Just drive right back into Livingston-

CECIL
Sure. That way, if they're on to us, we'll just get nailed on the car rather than wait until they have the whole magnum grand larceny rustling number to throw at us.

JACK
You're smart, Cecil. You'll go far. You might be the Sitting Bull of our era, though that would surprise me very much.

ANGLE

They throw their gear in back and climb into the truck.

JACK
Let's go to town and have breakfast.

INT. BROWN RANCH HOUSE.

JOHN and CORA BROWN.

JOHN BROWN

This is honestly getting unbearable Cora. That old bastard snoozing out there and watching TV and cultivating his dreamlife! I hand him the absolute ultimate clue and it bores him. I'll tell you what, as of this minute, Yours Truly is on the case. I'm going to railroad these criminals all the way to Deer Lodge.

CORA BROWN

You might be the Johnny Dollar of our Era John.

JOHN BROWN

Come on, Cora. Take me seriously.

CORA BROWN

I am taking you seriously, John. I think you just might solve this thing. But then where are we? You'd have the rustler in the penetentiary and we'd be right back to where we were before we had the rustlers.

JOHN BROWN

What do you mean by that?

CORA BROWN

Do you remember how boring it was around here without them?

JOHN BROWN

I don't know, I don't know-

CORA BROWN

Sure you do.

JOHN BROWN

How can we admit a thing like that! How can I go into town and try to solve this if we take the position that we can't live without the rustlers? This is where I part company with you

(MORE)

JOHN BROWN (Contd)
women. You refuse to play the game and you ruin life with your literal-mindedness.

CORA BROWN
All right. Let's say I buy all that. Now what are you going to do?

JOHN BROWN
I am going to go into town and pursue this case until...until these vicious people have been run to earth.

CORA BROWN
Uh, go to it, John.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. DOWNTOWN LIVINGSTON: A PHONE BOOTH

JACK finishes making a telephone call and comes out of the booth, where CECIL stands waiting.

JACK
I got Burt. He said to go ahead and rent a semi. I tried to get him to split with us on the rental but he knows we got the Baseheart-Of-Bozeman money and he wants us to front the expenses and take it out of the profits. He's a real sharpy.

CECIL
What about turning the truck around?

JACK
Burt says there are about four big flat spots and to bring wire cutters so we can pick our place. Let's get a road atlas. Burt has lined up a feed-lot in Rainbow Rock, South Dakota where we can lay off the whole load.

DISSOLVE:

INT. RAILROAD CAFE.

JACK and CECIL sit with their breakfast and a road map.

CECIL
We'll have days probably before that stock is discovered missing.

JACK
Burt says old Brown isn't interested anyway. At *least*, not enough to go riding around on his ranch. -Now, the stock is gonna be in that last grove of aspens. They're gonna wire them in and all we do is back the truck up to the wire, cut it and start loading.

CECIL
Where's Burt and Curt gonna be at?

JACK
Asleep in the bunkhouse. He was real clear about that. If we blow it, he said he doesn't know us.

CECIL
You know, one other thing...

JACK
?

CECIL
What are we gonna do with the money?

JACK
Aw, I don't know. This is just to keep from falling asleep. Don't you know?

CECIL
Well, old pal, the thing is, I don't have any trouble staying awake.

JACK
Look, here's what we'll do. We'll finish this job and
(MORE)

JACK (Contd)
retire at Rancho Deluxe just south of Big Rock Candy Mountain. They got a stream by Whirlpool Products and whole groves of sun-lamp trees. And we'll be wide awake.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. LIVINGSTON CITY DUMP.

as a Texaco wrecker hauls the perforated Lincoln backwards toward the scrap heap. JOHN BROWN picks his way through the refuse toward the truck.

ANGLE

JOHN BROWN at the truck window.

JOHN BROWN
Who's this car belong to?

TRUCK DRIVER
Have to ask at the highway patrol. They sent me for it. Looks like Baby Face Nelson's.

INT. LIVINGSTON POLICE STATION.

JOHN BROWN
Can you tell me who that Lincoln Continental belongs to? The one you fellows just sent to the dump.

POLICEMAN
Belongs to Mr. Wilbur Fargo.

JOHN BROWN
What's the story?

POLICEMAN
It was stolen and vandalized. That's all we know right now. We've got a real feeling it was negroes. Wait a minute, I'm way out of line. Let's just say it could have been negroes.

JOHN BROWN
You mind looking up Mister Fargo's address please?

JACK (Contd)
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JOHN BROWN
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POLICEMAN
Not at all.

JOHN BROWN
When was the last time you saw a negro in Livingston?

POLICEMAN
On the one fifteen train from Billings. A redcap.

JOHN BROWN
Are you sure it wasn't Al Jolson?

POLICEMAN
You want to look this number up yourself?

JOHN BROWN
Yeah, give me that. -You're just a natural detective, aren't you officer. Allow me to air-express your portfolio to Elliot Ness. You have a future.

DISSOLVE:

INT. THE FARGO HOME.

as MARY answers the door. She has electro-frizzed her hair out to about eight cubic feet. It is JOHN BROWN.

JOHN BROWN
Hello, I'm looking for Wilbur Fargo. Is he in?

ANGLE

INT. THEIR DAD'S RECREATION ROOM.

as JOHN BROWN and THEIR DAD enter.

JOHN BROWN
I realize that your car was amply covered by insurance. But I do have a special reason for wanting to know if you have any notion who might have taken it.

THEIR DAD
I don't know and I don't want to know.

JOHN BROWN
It seems to me you mainly don't want to know.

THEIR DAD
That may be it.

JOHN BROWN
Do you already know?

THEIR DAD
No.

JOHN BROWN
I think you do.

THEIR DAD
Well, you're full of shit then.

JOHN BROWN
What is it, Wilbur. Who are you trying to protect?

THEIR DAD
Nobody-

JOHN BROWN
Who is it, Wilbur?

THEIR DAD
I said I didn't know! Now you're gonna have to get the hell out of my house!

JOHN BROWN
Are you trying to protect yourself Wilbur?

THEIR DAD
No!

JOHN BROWN
I think you are.

PAUSE.

THEIR DAD
Well, what if I am? What if I am trying to protect myself? What of it? And why is it any of your business. And what else do human beings do besides
(MORE)

THEIR DAD (Contd)
protect themselves? I just resent the hell out of your treating it as a discovery.

JOHN BROWN
All right, Wilbur. Let's you and I leave it at that. But just for the sake of reason, why don't you figure on seeing me again.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

JACK and CECIL'S HOUSE: the big GMC semi is parked in front. It has a huge American flag on each door and a long stock trailer on the back. We circle the truck lovingly as one of the great artifacts of our land. On the back of the truck are two legends: EAT MONTANA BEEF and opposite that Eat Lamb: Fifty Thousand Coyotes Can't Be Wrong.

EXT. SUMMER RANGE OF THE LAZY T-BAR J.

A classic roundup scene. BURT and CURT drive cattle into the aspens where they have constructed an impromptu wire enclosure.

ANGLE

BURT and CURT.

CURT
This is the life, Burt.

BURT
Yes, it is Curt.

CURT
Riding the range.

BURT
Yup. Curt, how long you been doing ranch work?

CURT
Two years straight. Worked ranches in the summer when I was in high school.

BURT
What'd you do before you came here?

CURT
I modeled hot combs on Butte TV. What about you?

BURT
Appliance repair.

CURT
I think we got enough cattle in there to fill that blame truck.

BURT
One of us will have to come up here in the morning and hide this wire. After that we just wait for payday. And to tell the truth, I got mine about spent.

CURT
On what?

BURT
I'm going to take a winter vacation. I'm gonna hire me a villa down in Puerto Vallarta where Elizabeth Taylor and them go. How 'bout you?

CURT
You'll laugh.

BURT
I probably will. But why don't you go on and tell me anyway.

CURT
*I'm going to ask Laura to* marry me.

BURT
I was afraid that was it.

CURT
I mean, Laura would be a surprised as you. We haven't
(MORE)

CURT (Contd)
got that far along. But I know it's what I want.

BURT
Get in her pants yet?

CURT
Now don't start in, Burt-

BURT
How bout some tit? Didja get any tit off her?

ANGLE

A long shot as CURT jumps BURT and they roll around on the ground. The horses continue grazing. The combatants become part of the scenery.

DISSOLVE:

DINNERTIME AT THE LAZY T-BAR J: JOHN and CORA BROWN, BURT and CURT, LAURA and HENRY BEIGE. CORA BROWN has put on an impressive spread.

CORA BROWN
Now everybody concentrate on overeating. That's the first step toward a really Christian attitude.

JOHN BROWN
I am beginning to see the light-

CORA BROWN
Would this be the light at the end of the tunnel?

JOHN BROWN
This would be light in general. I'm beginning to see what that little twerp was trying to hide.

HENRY BEIGE
What little twerp?

JOHN BROWN
I'm not sure this would interest you, Mr. Beige. This has to do with solving a little problem we have around here.

HENRY BEIGE
What little problem would this be?

JOHN BROWN
(shouting:)
THAT WOULD BE RUSTLING, MISTER BEIGE!

HENRY BEIGE
Well, I be dog. Listen to him now.

JOHN BROWN
You will listen to me all right! All of you! We are the victims of crime and it just seems to bore you! It even bores _you_, Mister Beige!

HENRY BEIGE
It don't exactly bore me-

JOHN BROWN
Don't you understand, Mister Beige?! _I've got a hot lead!_

HENRY BEIGE
Well, run er down then, son. I don't want to take the fun out of it for you.

JOHN BROWN
Take the fun out of it for me! You aren't gonna take the fun out of it for me, you two thousand year old rangeland cornball! And I'll tell you why: because you're gonna get your shrunken ass the hell out of here in twenty four hours.

HENRY BEIGE
Twenty four hours'd be about fine by me.

LAURA jumps up and rushes out of the room sobbing. CURT follows, imagining he does so unobtrusively.

CORA BROWN
John, I think this has all been in despicable taste.

JOHN BROWN
I'm being bled to death by cattle thieves! I'm trying to keep from drowning! And you want to review my taste! You have to promise me that you're joking!

HENRY BEIGE slowly gets to his feet, leans over and reaches for his two canes. We follow his everlastingly painful progress to the door and out.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

CURT and LAURA. LAURA covers her face and, in general, appears to be in great distress.

LAURA
It's just that Uncle Henry has always been such a good person. So good to everyone. And it's just broke my heart to see him so old and helpless.

CURT
I know, darling, I know.

LAURA
And please don't call me darling.

CURT
But why?

LAURA
Because I can't have anything to do with this place after Uncle Henry's failure. I just can't.

CURT
Oh, Laura-

LAURA
There's no chance for Uncle Henry now. In another day we'll be gone. A great old man, a great stock detective, will finally...have to look defeat in the face.

CURT
I still don't see why I can't
call you darling.

LAURA
You can't see that?

CURT
I really can't.

LAURA
It's because I love you. And
since Uncle Henry has failed,
I have to stick by his side and
take him home. If I let you
call me them endearments, it
would only be admitting everything I have to leave.

ANGLE

Tight on CURT as his face runs a screening on his simple thoughts.

INT./EXT. JACK AND CECIL'S PLACE.

as they pack some belongings in the semi. They are dressed for work in Levis, boots and down jackets.

JACK
Would you call this real
life, Cecil?

CECIL
It is to me, Jack.

JACK
I noticed now how wide awake
I am. Why is that?

CECIL
Fear, I'd say Jack. How many
pairs of clean socks are you
bringing?

DISSOLVE:

JOHN AND CORA BROWN.

JOHN BROWN
I am not a monster! I am a
property owner!

CORA BROWN
John, John! It's me, Cora!

JOHN BROWN
What's that mean, Cora?

CORA BROWN
Sounded like you were addressing
the multitudes.

JOHN BROWN
It's just that it seems fairly
clear to me that when I got
the goods on the rustler-

CORA BROWN
It's just one?

JOHN BROWN
I've got the goods, that's all
Cora. And I'm not gonna sit
around just because it would be
polite to let that old dip-shit
Henry Beige solve this thing at
some remote future date!

CORA
All right, what are you
going to do then?

JOHN BROWN
I'm going to clean this mess
up right now.

DISSOLVE:

INT. A DOOR.

WE HEAR LOUD KNOCKING. THEIR DAD, followed by BETTY and MARY at some distance, approach this urgent knocking. THEIR DAD opens the door revealing JOHN BROWN and the same POLICE OFFICER THEIR DAD had brought to JACK and CECIL'S party.

JOHN BROWN
Wilbur Fargo?

THEIR DAD
You know that, Brown.

JOHN BROWN
You're under arrest. Officer
Crane here has the papers.

ANGLE

BETTY and MARY listening.

THEIR DAD
What is the charge?

ANGLE

JOHN BROWN as a smile of deep personal satisfaction, of a job well done, spreads across his features.

JOHN BROWN
You are charged with willfully
destroying your own automobile
to collect the insurance and
with operating a rustling ring.
I'd of thought you'd be smart
enough to use a different rifle
for different jobs.

THEIR DAD
Now wait just a damn minute.
I got some talkin to do. As
much as I hate to talk to morons
at any time.

DISSOLVE:

ANGLES ON:

BETTY and MARY racing through Livingston, down Calendar Street and past the country Courthouse.

ANGLE

BETTY and MARY at JACK and CECIL'S. The semi is gone. The girls pound their door without avail.

EXT. HIGH SUMMER RANGE.

JACK and CECIL are on horseback. We watch them push the last steers into the semi with a lot of yelling and arm waving. It interests us that these two are good at this sort of thing.

ANGLE

We circle the truck looking at the tens of thousands of pounds of living beef.

ANGLE

CECIL drops the loading gate and dismounts. JACK dismounts and they unsaddle the two horses. They remove the bridles, and slap the horses on the rump to scatter them.

ANGLE

We follow the horses cantering off toward the trees.

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL carry the saddles and tack to the truck and throw it in. *WE HEAR OMINOUSLY LOUD* BAWLING FROM THE STEERS.

INT. THE CAB OF THE SEMI.

As the two climb in. CECIL drives.

JACK
I'm glad you can deal with this mother. Fifteen gears-

CECIL
Which you can split. So that makes thirty. Plus Mexican overdrive-

THE BIG DIESEL STARTS AND REVS. They begin to move.

JACK
Did you remember to fuel it?

CECIL
(panic:)
I thought it was full when we rented it?

JACK
Well, just look at the gas gauge! I didn't know you were nervous.

CECIL
Full to the top.

JACK
All right-

They begin to work their way down the long, bad road, through buttes, bends and rimrock.

JACK
What's Mexican overdrive?

CECIL
Neutral.

ANGLES ON THEIR DESCENT.

JACK
How do you feel?

CECIL
Like a million dollars. -All green and wrinkled.

JACK
I haven't heard that since fourth grade. -Well, I feel free as free can be. I feel like I've *given my soul its* liberty. I'm awake!

CECIL
Why do you have so many theories, Jack?

EXT. THE SEMI.

WE HEAR THE NUMEROUS GEAR CHANGES AND DOUBLE CLUTCHINGS. Near the bottom of their descent, *they round a sharply radiused turn, gear down for* it, and as they finish the bend:

ANGLE

JACK and CECIL, weirdly alert.

ANGLE

Tight on JACK.

JACK
Aw, gee.

ANGLE

JACK'S and CECIL'S point-of-view:

The biggest roadblock ever, directed and conducted by HENRY BEIGE. He is the only man mounted and, towering over everyone, surges back and forth on his charger, waving a gun around and being, generally, magnificent. *The sheriffs and deputies* of Park, Meagher and Sweetgrass counties are here, as well as dozens of volunteers from neighboring ranches. If plausibility seems to permit, maybe women and children are here to watch. *Maybe they're* eating chicken and potato salad and drinking Nehis; so that there is a certain air of the country picnic.

ANGLE

The yard of the Lazy T-Bar J as JOHN BROWN *swirls up* in his car, scattering gravel. CORA BROWN comes to the kitchen door. JOHN BROWN jumps out of the car.

JOHN BROWN

Cora! I've got it! I know who it is! I've got it!

CORA BROWN

Come on in, John, and let me buy you a drink.

DISSOLVE:

JOHN and CORA BROWN, LAURA and HENRY BEIGE in the living room of the ranch house. HENRY BEIGE is striding around. LAURA stands there carrying his canes. He hands JOHN BROWN a sheet of paper.

HENRY BEIGE

Brown. there's m'bill. You can pay it or you can use it to wipe the Pablum off of your chin.

JOHN BROWN

(writing a check:)

I'll pay it.

HENRY BEIGE

It's no nevermind to me. I'm in it for the sport. -Now let me give you a rule of thumb and maybe you'll be able to keep this ranch: all large scale crime is an inside job. Runnin up and down the road, taking fingerprints and sendin trash to crime labs just don't get it. You gotta be human.

LAURA

Come on, Henry, let's get the hell out of this pop stand. I want to get to Great Falls and spend my cut.

DISSOLVE as they go.

ANGLE

The faces of BURT and CURT in the rear of a traveling car. BURT looks out the window with exhausted disgust. CURT looks straight ahead, tears all over his face, and about a quart of snot running out of his nose.

WE PULL BACK

as CURT speaks:

CURT
I thought...I thought she
loved me...

They are revealed handcuffed in the back of a sheriff's car.

ANGLE

As the sheriff's car pulls away from us into infinities of mountains and highway

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

But lyrically. A small log cabin. In the suspicious distance, are a few similar log cabins. Out of the stone chimney, a wisp of smoke inclines very slightly from the verticle in the cold blue morning air.

Beyond the cabin, meadows bisected by a small mountain brook. It is early in the morning and the meadow glistens with dew. Grasshoppers snap from spot to spot in the sun. We can see some cattle.

ANGLE

the front of the cabin. Two nice saddle horses are hitched to the porch rail. Over the cabin door, a sign:

RANCHO DELUXE

ANGLE

The door opens suddenly and JACK and CECIL emerge, in Levis, denim shirts and canvas jackets. They are dressed like twins.

CECIL

You try to remember it
today. Two year old steers
in the North pasture. Cows,
calves, and bred heifers in
the South.

JACK

Got it.

CECIL

Then I'll make lunch while
you practice walking that
coin between your fingers.
And you wash dishes while
I practice card tricks.

ANGLE

They mount up and ride away from us.

JACK

Whatever you say, Cece.
We can find the way.

DISSOLVE:

The two cutting out a calf from a bunch of livestock. We follow as they canter, jump the brook and head the calf off at the fence. The fence is about twelve feet high.

ANGLE

From somewhat below: the two horsemen.

PULL BACK

and keep pulling back for a thousand feet. The two horsemen, all the foreground, shrink and disappear in the landscape.

THE SHOT CONCLUDES with the gate:

MONTANA STATE PENETENTIARY AT DEER LODGE

-PRISON RANCH-

FADE OUT

as soundtrack comes up: Don't Fence Me In.

The End.